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INFO RUCNARF/ASEAN REGIONAL FORUM COLLECTIVE IMMEDIATE  
RUEHOO/CHINA POSTS COLLECTIVE IMMEDIATE  
RUEHGV/USMISSION GENEVA IMMEDIATE 2564

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 BEIJING 003507

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E.O. 12958: DECL: 12/31/2029  
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SUBJECT: PRC: VICE PRESIDENT XI JINPING STRENGTHENS  
RELATIONS WITH CAMBODIA DURING DECEMBER 20-22 VISIT

REF: A. PHNOM PENH 913  
[1](#)B. PHNOM PENH 925  
[1](#)C. PHNOM PENH 926  
[1](#)D. PHNOM PENH 934  
[1](#)E. PHNOM PENH 954  
[1](#)F. PHNOM PENH 956  
[1](#)G. PHNOM PENH 957  
[1](#)H. PHNOM PENH 958  
[1](#)I. PHNOM PENH 960  
[1](#)J. BEIJING 3443

Classified By: Acting Political Minister Counselor Ben Moeling. Reason  
s 1.4 (b) and (d).

[1](#)1. (C) SUMMARY: Cambodian and Chinese official sources told EmbOffs that no connection exists between Cambodia's December 19 forced repatriation to China of 20 Uighur asylum-seekers and the PRC's announcement of USD 1.2 billion in bilateral assistance during Vice President Xi Jinping's December 20-22 visit to Cambodia. An MFA official and the Cambodian Ambassador to China separately described China-Cambodia relations as strong and argued that Vice President Xi's visit, and the record aid package that he delivered, would strengthen bilateral cooperation. Cambodia's Ambassador invited increased U.S. involvement in Southeast Asia and proposed greater U.S. funding for Cambodian students to study in the United States to demonstrate expanded U.S. engagement.  
END SUMMARY.

MFA: No Connection Between Aid and Deportation  
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[1](#)2. (C) MFA Asian Affairs Department Cambodia Division First Secretary Li Jie told EmbOffs December 30 that no connection existed between Cambodia's December 19 forced deportation of 20 Uighur asylum-seekers to China and the PRC's announcement of USD 1.2 billion in bilateral assistance during Vice President Xi Jinping's December 20-22 visit to Cambodia. Cambodian Ambassador to China Khok Kaimealy Sysoda, a High Privy Councilor of the King of Cambodia with the rank of Deputy Prime Minister and long-time confidante and former protocol chief of "King-Father" Sihanouk, separately told EmbOffs December 29 that she was in "all of the meetings" with Vice President Xi in Cambodia and recalled no mention of a linkage between the PRC offer of assistance and the Cambodian government's decision to refoule the 20 Uighur asylum seekers. MFA's Li explained that Cambodia, as a country ruled by law, "independently" decided to deport the Uighurs to China because the asylum-seekers had violated Cambodian immigration laws, thus obviating the need for China to make a representation on the matter. (NOTE: Per reftel H, Cambodian Ministry of Foreign Affairs spokesman Koy Kuong stated publicly on December 17 that China had sent a diplomatic note to the Cambodian government concerning the status of the Uighur asylum-seekers. This contradicts Li's portrayal of complete Chinese non-involvement in the Cambodian government's decision to return the asylum-seekers.)

## MFA: China-Cambodia Relations Strong

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13. (C) China and Cambodia enjoyed long-term friendly relations based on the principles of equality and mutual benefit, according to MFA's Li, who added that China's bilateral relationship with Cambodia was cemented in history, shared culture, and strong relations between Cambodia's monarchy and every Chinese leader from Mao Zedong to present.

Li elaborated that Vice President Xi's visit strengthened bilateral cooperation, as demonstrated by the signing of 14 bilateral agreements during his visit. MFA's Li and Ambassador Khek both separately confirmed that Vice President Xi Jinping and his Cambodian interlocutors focused on bilateral issues during Xi's December 20-22 visit and did not discuss any regional issues in depth. While separately providing a similarly positive assessment of the bilateral relationship, Cambodian Ambassador Khek indicated that the Cambodian Embassy did not have a central role in resolving sensitive bilateral issues. Asked about recent proceedings for the Khmer Rouge Tribunal, Ambassador Khek stated that her MFA interlocutors had never raised the matter with her, and commented conspiratorially that "the Khmer Rouge were educated in France and supported by China: that is all there is to know."

## USD 1.2 Billion Aid Package Largest Ever

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14. (C) Ambassador Khek described China's USD 1.2 billion aid pledge announced during Vice President Xi's visit to Cambodia

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as the largest Chinese assistance package ever to Cambodia, and explained that the PRC aid, roughly 60 percent concessional loans and 40 percent grants, would support new and existing infrastructure projects, including roads in Cambodia's border regions, high-visibility projects such as preservation of historical temples and reconstruction of Cambodia's Senate building, as well as hydropower projects. MFA's Li explained that the infrastructure-intensive aid package was intended to build a strong economic foundation for Cambodia's future development. Ambassador Khek also underscored the role that prominent Chinese investors like CNOOC and SinoHydro would play in oil and hydropower projects respectively. In addition to China, Ambassador Khek also identified Japan and South Korea as major aid donors to Cambodia, noting that all three countries were providing more assistance than the United States.

## Cambodia Invites Increased U.S. Engagement

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15. (C) Ambassador Khek commended Secretary Clinton and President Obama's recent participation in ASEAN events and encouraged continued U.S. engagement in the region. She also pointed to China's provision of 80 scholarships annually for Cambodian students to study in China, and encouraged the United States to follow suit by increasing the number of U.S.-funded scholarships for Cambodian students to study in the United States.

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